

Soviet History:

Countering misperceptions and
promoting re-conceptions



An online journal by LeftistCritic

Editor's Note

Hello there. This is the third issue of a journal accompanying the Soviet history subreddit. This issue reprints a critical review of a book by bourgeois pacifist David Swanson focusing on the Kellogg-Briand Pact which was originally posted on my blog. Footnotes have been added rather than the original endnotes/references in the original article as to let the reader know what sources are being used for the content of the text. Each issue shall be posted in a time frame best suited for myself as to not increase strain on myself. I hope you enjoy this. Comments are welcome.

Best regards,
LeftistCritic

David Swanson, the USSR, and the Kellogg-Briand Pact

Published on [January 6, 2017](#)



A screenshot from a 1949 animated Soviet propaganda film by Victor Gromov, titled "Mr. Wolf," focusing on a pacifist capitalist, like Andrew Carnegie perhaps, who, fed up with the horrible nature of war, moves to an "island of peace." But when he finds oil, he gets greedy, dropping his belief in pacifism, demands control of it, reveals his secret stash of arms, and seizes control of the oil with the help of (presumably) the US Navy. The message of greedy capitalists and duplicitous pacifists is very clear.

As Trump [promises to increase](#) military spending, including 350 more ships for the Navy ([likely costing](#) over \$126 billion dollars), strengthening the murderous US empire, which builds off the brashly imperialist foreign policy of the Obama administration, it is important to recall our history. This article will first outline the narrative by David Swanson, a former press secretary for bourgeois Democratic "peace" politician, Dennis Kucinich, during his presidential candidacy, and peace activist, on the

history of how the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 came into fruition, summarizing his book to the best of my ability, there will be a counterpoint to his history, and finally it will end with my conclusion on where to go from here.

David Swanson's narrative of what happened

David Swanson's book is a good place to start. While he is not radical, and arguably a bourgeois pacifist, he does help tell this story. As he tells it, the peace movement in the 1920s, depending on new female voters, united around the idea of war outlawry, previously split by the League of Nations, seen as a glorious and noble cause.¹ This movement was strengthened by outrage at the horrible effects of WWI, despite the manipulation of emotions, by Woodrow Wilson's "propaganda machinery," in the form of the Committee of Public Information, to influence Americans to support war.² Such manipulation was preceded by Wilson winning election in 1916, with slogans like "he kept us out of the war," but turning around and involving the US in WWI in April 1917. Many in the US, disillusioned with promises of war, distrusted European peace efforts, as the US membership in the League of Nations and World Court did not materialize, along with other failed negotiations in the 1920s, the peace movement grew.³ Leading intellectuals, robber-barons, like Andrew Carnegie who founded the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and politicians, like Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt, promoted peace. At the same time, "peace societies" were created in the US, along with a litany of other pro-peace organizations, such as the American Friends Service Committee and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, some of which spread "a barrage of peace propaganda."⁴

There are number of individuals who specifically pushed for "[war outlawry](#)" or the abolishment of war. Swanson cites 22 individuals.⁵ One of these individuals was Salmon Oliver Levinson, a Yale graduate and Chicago lawyer who led the American Committee for the Outlawry of War, which tried to make war illegal and recognized as an institution.⁶ Others, such as Kirby Page and temperance activist Carrie Chapman Catt, also pushed for war outlawry, allied with other forces, like the Progressive Party which represented interests of farmers, petty urban bourgeoisie, and trade unions, collapsing after the 1924 election, along with public opinion in favor of prohibiting war.⁷ Pro-peace clubs and organizations sprung up by the hundreds, with thousands of members, eliminating the divides in the past between more wealthy organizations, like the Carnegie Endowment and the American Foundation for Peace,

1 David Swanson, *When the World Outlawed War* (Charlottesville, VA, 2011), p. 6, 11-12.

2 Swanson, 11-15, 19-20. Such propaganda stayed in people's minds before Wilson saw public opinion as "something to use, rather than avoid," Swanson argues.

3 Ibid, 16-17.

4 Ibid, 17-18. The organization that paid for this was one group called the National Council for Prevention of War.

5 War Outlawrists that Swanson cites: John Dewey, Robert Farrell, Thomas Hall Shastid, Sherwood Eddy, Robert Farrell, Murray Butler, James Thomson Shotwell, Andrew Carnegie, Salmon Oliver Levinson, John Chalmers Vinson, John E. Stoner, Kirby Page, Charles Clayton Morrison, Arthur Capper of Kansas, William Borah, Warren G. Harding, John Haynes Holmes, Raymond Robins, Frances Keller, Calvin Coolidge, James Brown Scott, and Carrie Chapman Catt.

6 Swanson, 24-27, 30-33.

7 Ibid, 27-28, 60-69, 111-114; LeftistCritic, "[Annotating A Section of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia](#)," *Soviet History*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 38.

and more radical ones pushing for disarmament and opposing militarism.⁸ The former profited from war with hundreds of thousands of dollars in bonds from the U.S. Steel Corporation. However, it is worth pointing out that Outlawrists, tapping into widespread skepticism of collective defense agreements, “favored the rule of the written word” to prevent war, creating a world court which had international jurisdiction, but were muddled when they didn’t always consider the distinction between “aggressive” and “defensive war.”⁹ Beyond this, such a push for outlawing war was an effort to change people’s conceptions of what they consider “morally acceptable,” hoping that society could be organized for peace, but not always taking into account that some engage in statements of desire about ending war and peaceful resolution rather than the reality.¹⁰

From then on, there was a push for Western diplomats to negotiate what became the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Illegal diplomacy by pro-peace US citizens, led to debate among French, German, and British diplomats about being involved in the treaty, boosted by supportive writings in *The New Republic*, *New York Times*, and *Foreign Affairs*, along with sympathetic congressmembers like socially conservative William Borah and Republican [Robert LaFollette](#), among others.¹¹ [Aristide Briand](#), a long-time prime minister, advocate of “personal diplomacy,” and breaker of a railroaders strike, made the first move, with a Minnesota Republican, Secretary of State [Frank Kellogg](#), no active advocate of peace, forced into action even as he cursed pacifists privately.¹² Obviously in an effort to reinforce US imperialism, Kellogg was willing to threaten war to enforce the Monroe Doctrine in the Americas, derided by the new Soviet government, but was pushed into action by a strong peace movement, negotiating a treaty with the French secretly, making it multilateral even though Briand did not want this to happen originally.¹³ Some of the French showed their true colors, like [Paul Claudel](#), who said that outlawing war was sentimental and would please “cranks,” Bolsheviks and socialists, proposing a joint declaration of principles but Kellogg stuck by his demand for a treaty, later coming over to public negotiations of the treaty as the US and British allowed their respective imperialisms to fall under the idea of “self-defense” and not be covered by the treaty.¹⁴ The Kellogg-Briand Pact, also called the Pact of Paris, was signed in Paris in 1928, picketed by feminists saying that an equal rights treaty should be proposed and anti-imperialists who said that US imperialism would continue, and survived the US Senate (votes in favor 85-1), despite broad questioning of its effectiveness, then entering the canons of international law in July 1929.¹⁵

Swanson continues by saying that the pact’s ideas were influential. He says that it inspired the UN’s principles in 1945 and International Criminal Court, claiming the pact was the “first U.S. recognition of

8 Ibid, 20-23, 73-74.

9 Ibid, 34-37, 41-42. The idea of such enforcement was a court of law, with enforcement of rulings relying on good faith of nations, not military action, an economic blockade or sanctions, with the court as a form of “dispute resolution.”

10 Ibid, 37-40, 43-47.

11 Ibid, 49-59, 75-82, 90-91, 100-106.

12 Ibid, 5, 71-72, 84-85, 92-99.

13 Ibid, 85-89, 107-110.

14 Ibid, p. 111-123.

15 Swanson, 6, 125, 131-134, 136-142.

the Soviet Union's existence.”¹⁶ He also says that [Henry Stimson](#) tried to stop the USSR and [nationalist China](#) from supposedly going to the “brink of war.” He doesn't note that this was part of a “[Sino-Soviet conflict over the Manchurian railway line](#),” which was settled with a protocol that “affirmed the original status of the railroad as a joint enterprise” and [Soviet victory](#). At the time, Persia (Iran) defended the USSR rhetorically when it took defensive measures against nationalist China in the 1929 spat.¹⁷ Swanson also points out [Japan's invasion of Manchuria](#) in 1931, [Italy's invasion of Ethiopia](#) in 1935, and Germany [invading Poland](#) on Sept. 1, 1939 and the Soviets on Sept. 17, 1939 as violations of the pact. Not surprisingly, Swanson does not say that [this intervention](#) was in accordance with the secret Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact since the Soviets felt that the Polish could no longer defend themselves because of the collapse of their state after a Nazi attack, and the Soviets were welcomed by the Polish people as “true liberators.” Swanson goes on to say that the treaty was not ordinary, but meant to outlaw war, with the reality that the US quickly violated the pact, with peace structures not stopping the coming war. Some supported Outlawry at the time (Stimson) but opposed it later, and others, such as, a Wall Street lawyer named [William Chanler](#), a friend of Stimson, used it as a basis for criminal trials of the Germans and Japanese for war crimes at Nuremberg and the UN Charter as a whole.¹⁸ Eventually, Kellogg was given a Nobel Peace Prize for his work on the treaty even as he didn't stop advocating for US imperial aggression.

Before ending the section on Swanson's narrative, it worth noting how taken in he is about this story. He thinks war outlawry be revived and that we should have a “Kellogg-Briand Day” on August 27 every year, celebrating a “step toward peace” but war's abolishment or end.¹⁹ He goes on to say that his book, dispelling the well-kept secret that war is illegal, continues the campaign for outlawry, which

16 Ibid, 144-146; Kellogg said that the pact did not mean the US recognized the USSR, but the Soviets hoped the pact would be a way to gain rapprochement (*American Foreign Relations Since 1600: A Guide to the Literature*, Vol. 1 (ed. Robert L. Beisner and Kurt W. Hanson, Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 851.

17 Also see “[The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict, 1969: U.S. Reactions and Diplomatic Maneuvers](#)” published on the National Security Archive's website in 2001.

18 Swanson, 6, 146-155. As Chen Tiqiang argues, “Article 1 of the Anti-War Pact of Paris concluded on August 27, 1928, stipulates that the signatory countries to the pact “renounce...recourse to war as an instrument of national policy.” The Judgment of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East; pronounced on November 12, 1948, pointed out that a war in violation of the Paris pact is illegal by international law and that “those who plan and wage such a war with its inevitable and terrible consequences are committing a crime in doing so.” Thus, it is clear that wars of aggression had already been prohibited by international law before Japan launched its war of aggression. The Japanese Government, therefore, had launched its war of aggression against China wittingly and deliberately with full knowledge of its legal significance” (Chen Tiqiang, “[Conclusions Confirmed by History](#),” *Beijing Review*, Aug. 30, 1982, vol. 25, no. 35, p. 27). Another writer notes that “in the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact (or Pact of Paris), the States Parties solemnly declared “that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.” The Pact did not, however, specify criminal liability either for States or for individuals in the event of a violation of the Pact; whether the norm set forth in the Pact reflected a general rule of international law or one binding solely upon those States that had ratified the Pact was uncertain. As such, after the outbreak of World War II, many believed that no “international agreement criminalising wars of aggression was in force in 1939, and therefore, on the basis of the *nullum crimen sine lege* principle, the Allies were not legally entitled to prosecute the top Nazi leaders for aggression” but at the San Francisco conference in April 1945 they asserted that the original intent of the Kellogg-Briand Pact requires trying Nazis and Japanese fascists as war criminals (Sean D. Murphy, “[The Crime of Aggression at the ICC](#),” Public Law and Legal Theory Paper No. 2012-50, Legal Studies Research Paper No. 2012-50, 2012, p. 3-4). It is worth noting that WWII commenced even with the pact in place, but that the pact [influenced Japan's pacifist constitution](#).

19 Swanson, 6-8.

includes pushing countries to comply with the pact, and says that a public referendum on war is an intriguing idea.²⁰ At the end of his book, he outlines numerous proposals for reducing the US war machine,²¹ and says that his self-published book, where he had complete editorial control, is meant to help people learn about the Kellogg-Briand Pact and study peace activism that got us to Outlawry.²²

What Swanson missed



Another screenshot from the Soviet animated film “Mr. Wolf.”

In his happy good lucky story of the road to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, Swanson glosses over a number of details, almost portraying the US imperialists as “peacemakers” in the process. As the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* argued, the US tried to use the Paris Peace Conference, from 1919-1920, to marginalize the USSR, Harding’s administration, favoring monopolies, used the Washington Conference of 1921-1922 to force the UK to agree to equality between US and UK battle fleets, Coolidge’s administration was unfriendly to the USSR, and US warships helped bomb Nanking in 1927.²³ Additionally, Swanson’s book barely ever mentions the Soviets, usually only referring to them in passing except for one time when he notes that a delegate from the USSR, [Maxim Maimovich Litvinov](#), proposed to the League of Nations’s commission on disarmament in Nov. 1927 that there be the “immediate and total

20 Ibid, 5, 9-10, 49, 163-165.

21 Other peaceful proposals include simple disarmament, disentangling ourselves from alliances that cause us to go to war like NATO, pressure those in power, enacting numerous strategies and create a holiday for the pact on August 27, that war is good for nothing (p. 165-167, 169). His ideas, outlined in p. 166 to 167 include: (1) cutting half of a trillion dollars out of the national security budget, half into tax cuts for everyone, half into useful social spending; (2) bring the National Guard back home and de-federalize it; (3) ban redeployment of personnel suffering from PTSD; (4) ban no-bid military contracts; (5) restore constitutional war powers to Congress; (6) have a public referendum before any war; (7) close foreign bases; (8) ban weapons from space; (9) ban extralegal prisons; (10) ban “kangaroo courts” outside the US justice system; (11) restore habeas corpus; (12) ban use of mercenaries; (13) limit military spending; (14) ban secret operations, agencies, and budgets; (15) ban drone strikes; (16) forbid transfer of student info. to military recruiters without permission; (17) comply with Kellogg-Briand Pact; (18) reform or replace the UN; (19) join the ICC and make it independent of the UN; (20) disarm.

22 Swanson, 157-162, 170-171.

23 LeftistCritic, “[Annotating A Section of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia](#),” *Soviet History*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 35, p. 37-39.

abolition of all armies, navies, and air forces; the sinking of all warships; the scrapping of all war material; and the demolition of all arms factories” but Western governments rejected this, and the French even voted to expand their navy.²⁴ He never expands on other Soviet policies in favor of peace but has a very Western-centered approach, likely written with his audience of liberals and progressives in mind who scowl at the Soviet Union.

There is another aspect of the process that Swanson barely talks about, if he even alludes to it: the interests of Western capitalist states who engaged in the pact. Kellogg himself wanted to desperately avoid the treaty, which was, as some writers put it, “the product of *Realpolitik* and cynical political calculations,” with the French seeing the pact as a possibility for a “defensive alliance aimed at Germany” while in the US, many believed that “the solution to the scourge of war lay in the universal renunciation of its practice.”²⁵ More specifically, while Briand’s offer for negotiations on a treaty to end war “thrilled pacifist-minded Americans,” it also served “France’s strategic needs,” a way to sideline the US “should France go to war” but Kellogg understood “what Briand was trying to accomplish and wanted nothing to do with the offer” and did not like Briand’s “bid to energize U.S. peace groups and thereby box in the Coolidge administration.” Beyond this, Kellogg agreed to talk with the French, engaging in a multilateral treaty outlawing war rather than a bilateral treaty, which supposedly “rendered it largely ineffective, more a toy handcuff than an iron manacle” and Briand was hardly in a position to argue against it. Paris served as “the site for the historic meeting to renounce war” and US Senators had few illusions about the treaty, knowing “it was the international equivalent of an air kiss,” voting the same day “to fund the construction of fifteen new warships.”

The US State Department admits this much in [their write-up](#) about the pact. They argue that the pact had “little effect in stopping the rising militarism of the 1930s or preventing World War II” but also note the movement that pushed for the peace pact. France was facing, they note, “continuing insecurity from its German neighbor and sought alliances to shore up its defenses,” but the US was less eager to enter into a bilateral peace pact, worrying that it “could be interpreted as a bilateral alliance and require the United States to intervene if France was ever threatened” so they suggested that it be multilateral, which aligned with war outlawry being “immensely popular in international public opinion.” The State Department history also says that the pact’s language “established the important point that only wars of aggression – not military acts of self-defense – would be covered under the pact,” resulting in many nations signing it, and the U.S. Senate ratifying the agreement after making “reservations to note that U.S. participation did not limit its right to self-defense or require it to act against signatories breaking the agreement.” The pact was first tested, argues this history, during the Mukden Incident which led to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, but the fact of a “worldwide depression and a limited desire to go to war to preserve China” led to no action from the League of Nations or the US. Later threats to the agreement “from fellow signatories Germany, Austria and Italy” made it clear there “was no way to

²⁴ Swanson, 106.

²⁵ James M. Lindsay, “TWE Remembers: The Kellogg-Briand Pact,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 27, 2011.

enforce the pact or sanction those who broke it” with many ways around the terms, the pact not helping prevent WWII but very idealistic in the view of the State Department history.

In missing this aspect of the pact, Swanson, of course, did not mention the imperial nature of the pact itself. The *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* argued that the pact was originally used by the US and other imperialist powers as a “means of isolating the USSR” but that under “the pressure of public opinion they were forced to invite the USSR to subscribe to the pact.”²⁶ The Soviets [adhered](#) to the pact on August 29, 1928, details of which will be discussed later in this article. Such an action led to anger from Trotskyists who saw themselves as righteous in their “revolutionary” feelings, even though Leon Trotsky supported a continuation of the NEP, opposed measures to ensure the security of the Soviet state from opportunists and foreign enemies, and pushed the idea of “permanent revolution” while rejecting the more practical idea of “socialism in one country” proposed by Joseph Stalin, as noted in [a previous post on this blog](#). The Trotskyists claimed that the signing of this pact marked a departure from a “revolutionary path,” strengthened “bourgeois illusions,” struck at Lenin’s work, and that Western powers are not interested in peace but wanted to check the “successful robber activities of the Nipponese competitor,” Japan.²⁷ While most of these statements take an unrealistic counter-revolutionary viewpoint, the last statement about Western powers is one the Soviets would actually agree with.

The Soviet government had a good reason for signing the pact regardless of what the counter-revolutionary Trotskyists said. While they would have, a few years before, possibly sneered at the effort as “bourgeois sentimentalism,” the USSR wanted to join the world community even as the initial invitations for the pact excluded the Soviets, leaving them to believe there was the tacit formation of an anti-Soviet bloc, but the French invited the Soviets to be signatories and they did so, with their affirmation of the pact showing a “Soviet desire for peace.”²⁸ Signing the pact was also a continuation of previous Soviet policy. Beyond what Swanson briefly mentioned, in the 1927 and 1928 disarmament conferences, Litvinov offered wide-sweeping proposals for disarmament, which was popular among the public, even when the USSR adhered to the pact, one newspaper, the *Inprecor*, argued that Britain, France, and capitalist satellites like Poland, were continuing preparation for war on the USSR.²⁹

26 LeftistCritic, “[Annotating A Section of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia](#),” *Soviet History*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 39.

27 Max Shachtman, “War, Kellogg Pact and the Soviet Union,” March 1929, *The Militant*, Vol. II No. 5, 1 March 1929, pp. 1 & 4; Jack Weber, “March of Events,” July 13 1935, *New Militant*, Vol. I No. 29, 13 July 1935, p. 3; Sam Gordon, New Developments in Far East: Western Imperialists Register Protests as Japs Hold on to Booty, February 1932, *The Militant*, Vol. V No. 6 (Whole No. 102), 6 February 1932, p. 1.

28 Alastair Kocho-Williams, *Russia’s International Relations in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 52; Akira Iriye, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945*, Vol. 3 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 84-85, 106. Some say that the USSR remained “somewhat isolated diplomatically” by the West at least, but this is only one opinion on the matter. It is also worth noting that the provisions of the Kellogg-Briand Pact also applied to Soviet relations with Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania (Jan F. Triska and Robert M. Slusser, *The Theory, Law, and Policy of Soviet Treaties* (Sanford, CA: Sanford University Press, 1962), 250-251).

29 J.L. Black, *Canada in the Soviet Mirror: Ideology and Perception in Soviet Foreign Affairs, 1917-1991* (Canada: Carleton University Press, 1998), 66. The Comintern didn’t take Litvinov’s moves them seriously and got ready in case of invasion.

However, not everyone in the Soviet government wanted to ratify the pact. The People's Commissar of the Soviet Union (1924-1930) [Georgy Chicherin](#), opposed ratification, while [Nikolai Bukharin](#) (who supported NEP's continuation and wanted socialism at a "snail's pace") and Litvinov supported it, arguing that it would allow Western powers to interfere in Soviet foreign affairs, the same reason he opposed the Soviets joining League of Nations.³⁰ His supporters pointed to British & French reservations about the pact, arguing that it would have no effect.

Despite this argument, the Soviets signed the pact, but mad they were not invited to signing ceremony³¹, taking the position that "all international wars must be prohibited, in particular, wars with the aim of suppressing movements of national liberation," along with prohibition of "intervention, blockade, military occupation of foreign territory, foreign ports" along with "severance of diplomatic relations" since this "contributes to...an atmosphere that favors the occurrence of war."³² The Soviet government as a whole took the position that signing the pact showed they were consistent advocates of peace, and believed that only a "universal and complete disarmament plan" could prevent armed conflicts, while admitting the pact would be a dead letter unless growth of arms was limited. Some, such as [Evgeny A. Korovin](#), argued that the pact was a "serious blow to the system of the Anglo-French capitalist bloc" and that it weakened the League of Nations.³³ The Soviets also declared that the pact did not go far enough renouncing war by "failing to cover all methods of aggression," saying that the fact that the pact didn't have provisions for disarmament showed the "insincerity of bourgeois pacifism."³⁴ Looking at articles 1 and 2 of [the pact itself](#)³⁵ shows their criticism to be valid, as it is very loosely worded, only condemning recourse to war internationally and renouncing it as form of national policy:

ARTICLE I: "The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it, as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another."

ARTICLE II: "The High Contracting Parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means."

30 Jan F. Triska and Robert M. Slusser, *The Theory, Law, and Policy of Soviet Treaties* (Sanford, CA: Sanford University Press, 1962), 259.

31 On August 5, 1928, Chicherin argued that "the exclusion of the Soviet government from these negotiations leads us...to the assumption that among the real objectives of the initiators of this pact there obviously was and is an endeavor to make of this pact a weapon for isolating and fighting the Soviet Union. The negotiations regarding the conclusion of the Kellogg Pact was obviously an integral part of the policy of encircling the Soviet Union, which at present occupies the central point of the international relations of the whole world" (Xenia Joukoff Eudin and Harold Henry Fisher, *Soviet Russia and the West, 1920-1927: A Documentary Survey* (Sanford, CA: Sanford University Press, 1957), 352).

32 Triska and Slusser, 259.

33 Triska and Slusser, 260.

34 Triska and Slusser, 262. On the subject of the Litvinov Protocol also see Rudolf Bernhardt, *Use of Force · War and Neutrality Peace Treaties (N-Z)* (New York: North Holland Publishing Company, 1982), 36.

35 Documents about it [here](#) on the Avalon Project's website.

Additionally, the pact, unlike Soviet treaties of nonaggression which renounced war “completely, totally, and without qualification,” seemed to exclude warlike action and the right of self-defense from the pact’s operation, meaning that it, arguably, watered down and truncated the “concept of nonaggression.”³⁶ Later on, the Soviets would argue that a declared war or any “de facto military actions initiated by any state” should be considered a breach of the pact.³⁷

More importantly, the pact inadvertently gave Soviet foreign policy a boost. As a result of the pact, the Soviets proposed their own security policy, inviting neighbors to bring the pact into force by themselves, with what was called the “[Litvinov Protocol](#),” named after the Soviet diplomat, signed by the USSR, Poland, Latvia, and Estonia, later joined by Lithuania, Turkey, Persia, and [Free City of Danzig](#), with Finland not as a signatory.³⁸ This showed that the USSR was a champion of the principles in the pact and an “active proponent of the idea of curbing the freedom of states to indulge in waging war in order to promote their interests.” This pact, signed in February 1929, represented the “[spirit of the Pact of Paris](#),” while it renounced the use of force and [recourse to warlike measures](#), and while it provided little security for the neighbors of the USSR, its intention was more important than its application.³⁹ Part of the [text of the agreement](#) is reprinted below:

“...[the following governments] being desirous of promoting the maintenance of peace between their respective countries and for this purpose of putting into force without delay, between the peoples of those countries, the Treaty for the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy, signed at Paris on August 27, 1928, have decided to achieve this purpose by means of the present Protocol...”

Article I. The Treaty for the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy, signed at Paris on August 27, 1928...shall come into force between the Contracting Parties after the ratification of the said Treaty of Paris of 1928 by the competent legislative bodies of the respective Contracting Parties.

Article II. The entry into force in virtue of the present Protocol, of the Treaty of Paris of 1928 in reciprocal relations between the Parties to the present Protocol shall be valid independently of the entry into force of the Treaty of Paris of 1928...

Article IV. In order to give effect to Article I of the present Protocol, each of the High Contracting Parties, after ratification by its legislative bodies of the Treaty of Paris of 1928, shall immediately notify the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and all the other Parties to the present Protocol, through the diplomatic channel.”

36 Triska and Slusser, 258.

37 *International Law and International Security: Military and Political Dimensions* (ed. Paul B. Stephan and Boris Mikhaïlovich Klimenko, London: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991), 9, 296.

38 George Ginsburgs, *Moscow’s Road to Nuremberg: The Soviet Background to the Trial* (London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1996), 4.

39 Richard C. Hall, *Consumed by War: European Conflict in the 20th Century* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 97; Miron Rezun, *The Soviet Union and the Iran: Soviet Policy in Iran from the Beginnings of the Pahlavi Dynasty until the Soviet Invasion of 1941* (Geneva: Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales, 1981), 148, 154, 247; Marcel Mitrasca, *Moldova: A Romanian Province Under Russian Rule: Diplomatic History from the archives of the Great Powers* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2002), 8, 124, 330, 372, 377.

This agreement, also called the Moscow Protocol or more formally the “Protocol for the Immediate Entry into Force of the Treaty of Paris of August 27, 1928, Regarding Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy,” was immediately effective unlike the prolonged Kellogg-Briand Pact, with the Soviet negotiated agreement entering into force many months before the latter pact, and helping to improve Soviet relations with Poland.⁴⁰ The Soviet pact also disapproved the views of Western capitalists that “Red Russia would [not] keep a pledge to disarm.”⁴¹

Later on, in 1933, the USSR concluded a convention on the definition of aggression with Afghanistan, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Persia, Poland, Romania, and Turkey, and the next day a similar convention with Czechoslovakia, Turkey, and Yugoslavia.⁴² This agreement defined aggression as a “declaration of war, invasion, assault, naval blockade and support of armed bands” along with outlining false excuses and justifications for such aggression by capitalist states.⁴³ Over the years to come, as even noted by this anti-communist but partially fair [account of Soviet foreign policy](#), the Soviets recognized the danger posed by the Nazis, trying to “restrain German militarism by building coalitions hostile to fascism,” adopting a policy of “cooperation with socialists and liberals against fascism, thus reversing its line of the early 1930s,” with the county joining the League of Nations in 1934, and Litvinov advocating “disarmament and collective security against fascist aggression.” Beyond this, the Soviets also, in 1935, made alliances with France and Czechoslovakia, and “from 1936 to 1939 it gave assistance to antifascists in the Spanish Civil War,” leading to Germany and Japan signing the “Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936” but the West did not want to “counter German provocative behavior,” and after France and Britain appeased “Hitler’s demands for Czechoslovak territory at Munich in 1938,” Stalin then abandoned his “efforts to forge a collective security agreement with the West” apparently.

After this, Stalin came to an “understanding with Germany,” replacing Litvinov with his confidante, [Viacheslav Molotov](#) as commissar of foreign affairs, with the Nazis and Soviets engaging in “intensive negotiations,” leading to the [Nonaggression Pact of August 23, 1939](#), which “pledged absolute neutrality in the event one of the parties should become involved in war, while a secret protocol [that] partitioned Poland,” and soon thereafter the WWII began. Despite this, one cannot blame the Soviets for war, since felt they could not trust the Western powers to fight the Nazis by allying with them, and they did not want destruction of their country like happened during WWI. In later years, the Soviets pushed the UN for a new definition on aggression which encompassed viewpoints from across the Third World in 1953 and 1956.⁴⁴ After that point, when Khrushchev unfairly and traitorously denounced Stalin in his “secret speech” and cozied up more to the Western capitalists, revisionism took

40 KAZIMIERZ GRZYBOWSKI, “[INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FROM THE SOVIET POINT OF VIEW](#),” p. 885; David A. Kaplow, “[Nuclear Kellogg-Briand Pact: Proposing a Treaty for the Renunciation of Nuclear Wars as an Instrument of National Policy](#),” *Georgetown University Law Center*, p. 139; “When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics” ebook, “[Diplomatic Isolation and the Beginnings of Stalinism](#)” chapter, UC Press.

41 Time Magazine, “[RUSSIA: Litvinov’s Protocol](#),” Feb. 18, 1929; KAZIMIERZ GRZYBOWSKI, “[INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FROM THE SOVIET POINT OF VIEW](#),” p. 885.

42 KAZIMIERZ GRZYBOWSKI, “[INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FROM THE SOVIET POINT OF VIEW](#),” p. 885.

43 Triska and Slusser, 262-263.

44 Ibid.

hold in the country, only to be uprooted by 1964, seemingly, when Leonid Brezhnev took power. All of these aspects will be covered in later articles about Soviet history.

The fact that Swanson did not address the Soviet perspective on the pact at all is not much of a surprise. While he is good-intentioned in writing about this subject and his book is a worthy history, he also is a bourgeois pacifist who does not talk about the role of capitalism, class relations, or imperialist struggle in bringing this agreement to fruition. I don't wish to talk about that history in regards to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, as that would require a good amount of additional research on the subject. As a result, this article is just meant to criticize Swanson and bring a new perspective to light on this subject, leading to future discussion.

Concluding thoughts



Final screenshot from the Soviet animated film "Mr. Wolf" I'm using in this article.

Some may say that it isn't even worth reading the works of a bourgeois pacifist like David Swanson and that I'm giving him free press. While I can see where such a viewpoint is coming from, I also think it is unfair. It is worth reading other points of view in order to improve your own. There is no doubt that Swanson spent time and resources on writing his history, but his ideological viewpoint distorted his history so he did not, as a result, recognize the full reality. What I mean by this is that he is writing from a white, privileged, and Western perspective geared toward audiences in the United States. You could even add in that his perspective does not mention perspectives by women, not even white women, since only a smattering of the war outlawrists he cites are women. Additionally, where is a mention of race in this book? Doesn't the Kellogg-Briand Pact effect people of color across the world? Also, a more robust analysis of European imperialisms and US imperialism would have improved the narrative to be more critical of established power structures. This agreement led to a sort of "[capitalist peace](#)" you could say.

The current Kellogg-Briand Pact, coupled with Articles [1](#) and [51](#) of the UN Charter, is a good tool to restrain the murderous empire. However, one must be wary of the demands of bourgeois pacifism in this regard, as such pacifism does not recognize the possibility of revolutionary wars for liberation and often says that people should not have the right to armed self-defense, instead just engaging in peaceful measures. This should be rejected wholesale. If Palestinians have the right to fire back rockets in response to never-ending Israeli bombing then blacks in the United States have the right to defend themselves with arms against bigots trying to harm them. To be realistic, there will only be peace once socialist revolutions sweep the world and remove the virus of capitalism because militarism is deeply tied to such a horrid economic system. Sure, we can support the idea of outlawing war. However, we should not think that it, even if connected with an international court and other instruments of international law, will bring justice in a way that prevents capitalist exploitation. This is especially the fact if such a push does not include a demand for strong enforcement mechanisms, something that the Kellogg-Briand Pact lacks, not even allowing for sanctions, as much as they can be destructive and an instrument of imperialist aggression, of countries that violate its provisions.⁴⁵

45 The lack of such provisions in the Kellogg-Briand Pact is not a surprise because Western capitalist states would have never stood for strong enforcement, rejecting it in an effort to defend their own empires.